Elementary School Teachers Attitude towards Inclusive Education: An Empirical Study

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Abstract
This study investigated the attitudes of 150 elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to gender and location. Differential statistical analyses such as ANOVA, and t tests were administered to study the relationships between the various variables under study. The findings revealed that elementary school teachers showed positive attitudes towards inclusive education but male teachers showed more positive attitudes than females did. Likewise urban teachers also showed more positive attitudes than rural teachers towards inclusive education. No significant interaction effect was noted between gender and location of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Keywords: Attitudes, Elementary Teachers, Gender, Inclusive education, Location.

Introduction
Education is human right of every child either normal child or abnormal child. The government of India is committed to universalize the elementary education so that each child gets the opportunity to study but this objective cannot be achieved without taking care of special education needs of children with special abilities. Inclusive education approach is a positive step in this direction. Inclusion can be generally defined as a system that children with and without disabilities are placed in the same setting, mostly, in classrooms (Odom & Diamond, 1998). It involves active participation of all children, services providing support for children, professionals from different fields, and evaluation of children progress (Odom et al., 2004). Although the Constitution of India has also provided many facilities, policies, schemes for the successful implementation of inclusive education in schools yet there are numerous challenges that depicts varied results.
Teachers play a fundamental role in implementing an open and inclusive environment. Teachers assure that pupils in inclusive primary classroom can learn regardless of their abilities, but also acknowledges that many teachers face struggles with the process of implementing inclusive education and seem not to have skills that enable them to deal with the complexities of inclusive primary education. One important aspect of the individual called teacher is “attitude”. His attitude to himself, his work, his or her student and many other things depends on a number of variables which in turn influences his productivity. If the attitude of teacher is positive than s/he will try to adjust the classroom interaction according to the need, abilities and capabilities of the disabled child and will leave no stone unturned to help the child in all possible ways. But if the teachers’ attitude is negative then whatever policies and strategies are recommended by the Government will not be effectively introduced in the classroom.

DeBoer et.al (2011) suggested that the successful implementation of inclusive policies is greatly dependent upon the educators’ acceptance of them. Therefore, teachers’ perceptions of inclusive education must be evaluated in an effort to improve the deficiencies within the education system which negatively influence their perceptions and attitudes. Many teachers in inclusive school lack a special education training background in inclusive primary education. Teachers, who lack knowledge, experience and training in special need education, along with poor facilities are likely to have problems with the inclusion of pupils with learning disabilities in their classrooms. They generally show negative attitudes towards inclusive approach. The study by Slavica (2010) suggested that due to the lack of qualified staff, training, and lack of cooperation, inadequate facilities, overcrowded classes, and negative attitude from the public the inclusive education was not welcomed by the primary schools.

Andrews and Frankel (2010) recognized major concerns participants expressed about the implementation of inclusive education including inadequate training, lack of skills to teach students with special needs, lack of appropriate infrastructure, and the nonexistence of adapted curricula in the classroom. Each of these factors affected the experiences of the teacher in the inclusive classroom and their attitude towards inclusive education. Studies
conducted by Harton (1998); Classberry (2000); Hill (2000); Avramidis and Norwich (2002); Jones et al. (2002); Campbell et al. (2003); Hammond and Ingalls (2003); Galvin (2005); Ali et al. (2006); Lambe and Bones (2006); Obeng (2007); Elliot (2008); Malinen and Savolainen (2008); Nayak (2008); Horne and Timmons (2009); Fuchs (2010); and Hwang and Evane (2011) concentrate upon teachers attitude towards inclusive education thus, depicting that inclusive education approach has become the talk of the day. The present study has been conducted with the aim that the findings from the study will help identify the professional development opportunities and resources teachers need in order to be committed to inclusion. Also, knowing teacher attitudes and concerns about inclusion will help administrators in developing a strong inclusive setting for all students and staff in their building.

**Hypotheses of the Study**

1. The attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education will be neutral.

2. There will be no significant difference in attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to gender.

3. There will be no significant difference in attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to location.

4. There will be no significant interaction effect between the attitude of elementary school teachers in relation to gender and location.

**Research Design**

The present study was conducted on 150 elementary school teachers of Una District. A Self Constructed Teacher’s Attitude towards Inclusive Education Scale was used. The scale consisted of 30 items listed on 5-point Likert scale. A score of 5 was given to the option strongly agree, 4 to option agree, 3 to option undecided, 2 to option disagree and 1 to strongly disagree for all the items. The reliability coefficient by test-retest method was found to be 0.93. The scale possessed content validity because statement was selected based on unanimity of experts on content accuracy, conceptualization and distribution of statements over different dimensions. The attitude towards inclusive education scores were categorized as highly positive (above 120), positive (90-120), neutral (60-90),
negative (30-60) and highly negative (below 30).

Two way (2*2) ANOVA technique (Table 1), mean, standard deviation and t-tests (Table 2) were employed for the analysis and interpretation of data.

Results and Discussion
The data was analyzed to find answers to the hypotheses set for the study. The mean score of the total sample was found to be 94.76 which indicated that elementary school teachers of Una District have positive attitude towards inclusive education. Results of studies by Avramidis and Norwich (2002); Ali et.al (2006); Lambe and Bones (2006) and Dukmak (2013) are in line with present study. Teachers generally have a positive attitude towards teaching students in inclusive set up but due to unavailability of adequate resources their opinions vary. The results obtained for the main effects and interactions of factors have been presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Two-way (2*2) ANOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (A)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>598738.01</td>
<td>598738.01</td>
<td>66.6**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (B)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>743531.29</td>
<td>743531.29</td>
<td>82.71**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender x Location (A*B)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>94.76</td>
<td>94.76</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Treatment</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>1312446.24</td>
<td>8989.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Total</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significant at 0.01 level.

Main Effect (Gender/ Locality)
ANOVA results presented in Table 1 show the F-value for gender in the mean attitude towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers to be 66.6, and for location to be 82.71 which is statistically highly significant (P>0.01).

Interaction Effect (Gender x Locality)
The F-value for the interaction effect of gender and locality of elementary school teachers is 0.01 which is not significant at 0.05 level of confidence for 1/146df. Therefore, there exists
no significant interaction effect of gender and locality on the attitude towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers of Una district.

Table 2. Comparisons of Sub Samples for Attitude towards Inclusive Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Samples</th>
<th>Total (N)</th>
<th>Mean (M)</th>
<th>Standard deviation (σ)</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>99.12</td>
<td>17.96</td>
<td>3.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90.41</td>
<td>15.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>96.54</td>
<td>12.44</td>
<td>3.63**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>88.66</td>
<td>11.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significant at 0.01 level.

Further from Table 2, the result of t-test of significance of the means applied to each group indicate that both male and female as well as urban and rural elementary school teachers differ significantly in their attitude towards inclusive education scores as the values of t-test applied are found to be significant.

After comparing their means, it is found that attitude towards inclusive education score of male elementary school teachers is higher than those of female elementary school teachers. This indicates that male elementary school teachers have high positive attitude towards inclusive education than female teachers. Training and experience do affect the attitudes of the teachers as increased knowledge can lead to more positive attitudes and inadequacy in both results is negative attitudes. Taking this criteria into consideration, the higher positive attitude of male teachers may be due to the reason that in our society even today males find it more easier to attend various seminars and conferences to update their information to be best utilized for the development of children with special needs as compared to females who still find it hard to accomplish it. The results of the study are consistent with the results of Qaraqish, (2008); Rita (2008) and
Dukmak (2013) which also highlight that males have more positive attitudes than females.
The mean attitude score of urban elementary school teachers is higher than those of rural elementary school teachers. It means that attitude towards inclusive education of urban elementary school teachers are more positive as compared to their counterparts. The reason can be attributed to the fact that urban areas have higher access to facilities, resources and technology like special room, special teacher, special aids, and other related resources like internet which enhances their knowledge, understanding and awareness and thus their attitude towards inclusive education in comparison to rural areas which generally do not have these facilities to meet the demands. Similar results are also depicted in the study by Rita (2008).

Conclusions
After analyzing the data following conclusions have been drawn:
1. The attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education is positive.
2. Gender does affect the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. The attitude of male elementary school teachers is high in comparison to female elementary school teachers.
3. Location also affects the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. The attitude of urban elementary school teachers is higher as compared to rural elementary school teachers.
4. There is no significant interaction effect of gender and location on the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Educational Implications
It has been found from present study that the teachers are already aware about the desirability of inclusion of disabled children in the regular classroom, but still there is need to spread the awareness regarding inclusive education in regular classroom. There is need to develop awareness about the inclusive education among female and rural teachers as they revealed less positive attitude towards inclusive education than male and urban teachers. The barriers to inclusive education such as lack of adequate funding, curriculum, physical infrastructure, specially trained teachers, effective policies, organization of the education system etc have to be removed for developing positive
attitudes among teachers. In-service teacher training should be organized to provide proper training and skill development among general classroom teachers so that they are willing for the actual implementation of inclusion of students with disabilities. The administrations and policy makers should frame policies and laws, where maximum opportunity should be made available for the disabled children along with funds to implement the policies effectively.

References


